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## Lawmakers Under Fire for Comments Deemed Insensitive

By Brian Faler

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Two Republican House members from North Carolina -- Howard Coble of Greensboro and Sue Myrick of Charlotte -- drew fire recently after making comments deemed insensitive by some colleagues and minority groups.

On a radio talk show last week, Coble said he believes President Franklin D. Roosevelt was right to send Japanese Americans to internment camps during World War II. Coble rejected a caller's suggestion that President Bush do the same with Arab Americans. But he said FDR's now-controversial decision helped protect Japanese Americans from a fearful, often intolerant public.

Although most Japanese Americans posed no threat at the time, Coble said, Roosevelt's decision helped ensure national security. "Some [Japanese Americans] probably were intent on doing harm to us," Coble said, according to the Associated Press. "Just as some of these Arab Americans are probably intent on doing harm to us."

Floyd Mori, president of the Japanese American Citizens League, called the comments "outrageous" and "uneducated." "The government has recognized and apologized for their error of 60 years ago, and we expect Representative Coble to do so as well," he said.

In the late 1980s, the U.S. government apologized for the camps and offered compensation to about 60,000 survivors.

On Friday, three Asian American members of Congress -- Reps. Robert T. Matsui (D-Calif.), Mike Honda (D-Calif.) and David Wu (D-Ore.) -- requested a meeting with Coble.

"Incarcerating citizens and legal resident aliens solely because of their ethnicity is neither compatible with the Constitution nor an effective way to make our nation more secure," they said in a letter. "So that you may better understand our concerns for the appropriate balance of homeland security and constitutional civil rights, we would like to meet with you."

Myrick, in a recent talk on domestic terrorism, referred to Arab Americans and said, "Look who runs all the convenience stores across the country."

The Washington-based Council on Islamic-American Relations urged the Republican Party to condemn both lawmakers' remarks about Arab Americans. Myrick and Coble later said they had not intended to insult any ethnic group.

Myrick said she simply wanted to remind communities of the threat of terrorism, including "the illegal trafficking of food stamps through convenience stores for the purpose of laundering money to countries known to harbor terrorists."

## The Bronzing of the President

jury is in -- and it's building him a statue.

Hamilton High School, where Bush signed the legislation into law last year, has commissioned an artist to build a "sculpture plaza" to commemorate the event.

"This is [a] Republican area and everybody loves Bush," said Donna Carruthers, a local philanthropist, who, along with her husband, is footing the \$400,000 bill. "We're just grateful for the fact that he signed the bill here."

The work, which the school hopes to unveil next spring, will likely include a life-size bronze replica of the president, standing next to a lectern holding a copy of the legislation. He will be surrounded by school officials and a gaggle of children.

In Washington, some Democrats have scoffed at the plan, saying the administration has yet to fund the program at the levels Bush cited.

## GOP: Help Yourselves

In a closed-door presentation last week, National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Tom Reynolds (N.Y.) warned colleagues not to expect generous help from the party when they seek reelection next year, thanks to the new McCain-Feingold campaign finance law.

"Last cycle, the committee raised a net of \$100 million," Reynolds told the gathering Thursday night. "This cycle, we will have about half that. That means we are not going to be able to issue a million-dollar ad buy in the last week if someone is in trouble."

The law, which took effect in November, bars the national parties from raising unlimited "soft money," which enabled both major parties to help candidates nationwide.

*Staff writer Juliet Eilperin contributed to this report.*

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